Charlotte Mason's House of Education,
Scale How, Ambleside, UK, 2009

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BOOKS.

The Voice and Spiritual Education, by H. Corson, LL.D. (Macmillan and Co., 1/-). The author of this most suggestive little book says that literary criticism should consist for the most part of quotations: this is an admirable axiom which we hasten to fulfil by quoting a passage, which we beg to commend to everybody who is tempted to trust to literary lectures for a knowledge of literature:—"It is a comparatively easy thing to lecture about literary products, and to deal out literary knowledge of various kinds, and cheap philosophy in regard to the relations of literature to time and place. A professor of literature might do this respectably well without much knowledge of the literature itself. But what students especially need is to be brought into direct relationship with literature in its essential, absolute character; so that the very highest form of literary lecturing is interpretative reading. Such reading brings home to sufficiently susceptible students what cannot be lectured about, namely, the intellectually indefinite element of a literary product. Much of what is otherwise done for students, in the way of lecturing, they could do quite as well for themselves."

What shall I tell the children, by the Rev. G. V. Reichel (H. R. Allenson, 5/-). The idea of this volume is to associate an interesting story and some appropriate object with a Bible lesson. Recent science and history are laid under contribution; some of the stories are very sweet, as that of Correggio's Last Angel. The way in which the objects are used is curious: for instance, we have Lesson IX., The Judge's Story, object, a worn copy of a school geography, Scripture lesson, "With all perseverance," and then follows a brightly written story of a poor boy who made great efforts to buy a geography book, and prospered in the end. The volume should be very useful to Sunday School teachers.

OUR WORK.

House of Education.—A visit from Mrs. Curwen, which greatly stimulated the students' interest both in the Child Pianist Method and in Tonic Sol-fa, and the various examinations, were our chief events for July.

The Autumn Term begins on September 30th, and is a good time for the admission of students who wish to enter for three months with a view to personal training, but not to the taking up of teaching as a profession.

Parents' Review School.—We publish, though rather late, the examiner's report for the Easter Term:—

"The papers sent in show that, allowing for some unavoidable hindrances, the work of the term generally has been marked by steady, systematic, and patient effort, and that the teaching, in the majority of cases, has been sound, and the results successful and encouraging. The greater number of papers reach a good standard of attainment, some few are excellent, and a small number only fall below a fair average.

"The subjects that have been generally best done are Bible Lessons and the various Histories, and the weakest in all classes appear to be English Grammar and Arithmetic. Class III. and a few pupils of Class IV. have failed to master Decimal Fractions, probably owing very much—in the case of the examples given for examination—to the method employed in

solving the problems. In English Grammar many only give a very meagre quantity of work compared with other subjects.

"In Euclid, the few pupils who attempted the questions have done fairly well, and one student decidedly so.

"The Letter-writing, in almost every case, was very much better done than the composition on the given subject. This should receive the attention of teachers.

"In the Historical Subjects the facts are almost invariably well remembered, but scarcely sufficient attention appears to have been paid to the teaching arising from the facts, *e.g.*, the questions least satisfactorily answered were such as Nos. 2 and 4 in Literature, Class IV. and No. 3 in English History.

"The Brush Drawing, especially of leaves and plants worked systematically, although perhaps, except in one or two instances, of no great merit from an artistic point of view, and not quite equal to the work presented in the previous examination, must have been of real value in developing the power of accurate observation.

"The mechanical difficulties of Handwriting might probably in many cases be mastered at an earlier age, and more practice in reproducing in writing what has been read or learnt would undoubtedly secure greater accuracy of information and improve the spelling.

"The arrangement of marks given by parents on the printed list, has been of very great help in the examination, by preventing possible loss of marks and waste of time in looking up marks from all possible places and from small scraps of paper. It would be an additional help if the answers were all written on paper of uniform size, and that foolscap."

THE "P.R." LETTER BAG.

[*The Editor is not responsible for the opinions of Correspondents.*]

CHILDREN'S THOUGHTS. By Mrs. D. H. Scott.

It is very difficult to enter into the thoughts of small children, perhaps even more so than we often realize. We are apt to think that the words used by a child have the same meaning for him as they have for us. One knows that to a baby "Papa" is simply a generality meaning "man," I have even known a child apply the term in looking at a picture of an orang-outang; one notices the way in which a child before he is able to form sentences or appreciate the use of pronouns, will use them apparently quite intelligently, as: "where is it gone," "shut it up," "put it on," "all gone," each of these sentences as a whole expressing a clear idea to his mind though he could not separate it into words. It is difficult to constantly remember that their thoughts are not as our thoughts, and that when we give orders our words may have an entirely different meaning to their ears from what we intend. A visitor asks a small child of two where his nurse (who has just gone downstairs to fetch some milk) is. He says, "Nana gone washing," that being the one occasion when he has learnt to understand that he must do without his

nurse for some time. The word "washing" conveys no such meaning to him as it does to us. Or again, if he is asked (when his nurse has gone out to do some shopping perhaps) where she is, he says, "Nana gone church," because he connects the idea of seeing her in her hat, when he must not accompany her, with her going to church. Again, "church" has an utterly different meaning from what it has for us.

A child soon learns the meaning of "to-morrow." You may do so-and-so "*to-morrow*." To him this does not mean the next day, but the time after a certain sequence of events. For instance, one evening my boy asks to play with a certain toy, and I say "not to-night, *to-morrow*," he will then throw himself on the sofa, shut his eyes, lie still, and after a short interval will pretend to wake up, and say, "now to-morrow." He associates in his mind the idea of going to bed, going to sleep, and waking up again with the coming of to-morrow. In the same way if this happens in the morning, he will ask for his dinner (though he may have only just had breakfast) with the idea of hurrying on the sequence of events, which to his mind seem necessary for the production of "*to-morrow*." It is sometimes instructive to listen to children when they imagine themselves alone, in order to really get a clear idea of the workings of their minds. I reproduce a verbatim account of what I overheard my little girl aged $3\frac{1}{2}$ years say, when she was supposed to be having her morning rest. It was a foggy morning and she was sitting up, looking out of the window on to the green surrounded by lime trees, which had almost shed their leaves. Her parents had just returned from Eastbourne, and she had been promised a jackdaw, which, however, had not been given as it was found to have a fancy for pecking children's bare legs—

"Will the winter come soon? You poor little trees, all your leaves have fallen off, and you look all froggy (foggy). When the winter comes you'll all look nice and white. I've got two nice kind winter trees in my garden (a stone pine and a cedar), their leaves don't tumble off. What puts the leaves on again, when the summer comes? You'll have your leaves on again soon, when the thunder comes. Poor little jackdaw, wouldn't the little girl give you her necklace? *I'll* make you a nice red necklace to wear. Do jackdaws have black coats? Poor little jackdaw, I have a white coat, and a blue coat, and a green coat. I think all the children, and all the birds, and all the people in Richmond, and all the people who live in Eastbourne will cry when your leaves come off. Never mind, the snow will soon come and cover you all over. Come along, little jackdaw, when you live with me, you shall take my beads on the roof; you may come when Georgie has stockings. You silly trees on the green, you lose all your leaves, come and live in my garden, then you won't lose all your leaves. Do you know Papa's trees, what he keeps his boots on, *they've* got no leaves."

It seems to me, in re-reading this, that the whole train of thought is utterly different from that of a grown-up person. The child's sympathies extend to animals, plants, and even inanimate objects (boot trees!), while those of the grown-up person are almost entirely limited to his own species, and very often to one particular class of that.

DEAR EDITOR,—In the *Westminster Review* for July is a thoughtful article on the "Religious Education of Children," written from a point of view that may perhaps be described as that of a "devout agnostic." The writer, E. M. S., sums up thus:—"Begin children's religious education with moral education, and let that gradually pave the way towards knowledge of the spiritual basis upon which it has most generally been sought to establish morality. If we endeavour to cultivate and develop the moral sense in children, and so lead them to realize that

'Because right is right, to follow right
Were wisdom in the scorn of consequence,'

we shall have placed that moral sense on a firmer basis than can be afforded by any of the dogmas of religion. Fortunately these things are not so difficult to teach in little practical ways to children, though they cannot be taught to them in so many words. 'Heaven lies about us in our infancy,' and we are often surprised at the clearness of the moral vision of childhood. . . . To begin with the spiritual side of morality in the religious education of children is to begin at the wrong end. It is to implant in the minds of children not religion so much as superstition, because the religious beliefs of early childhood must necessarily take a form which is largely superstitious. Matthew Arnold's definition of religion as 'morality touched by emotion' has found little acceptation, and it cannot be denied that the religious beliefs, even of adult life, are often more emotional than rational. But it *can* be denied that the emotional element underlying belief in the dogmas of religion is suitable for the digestion of very youthful minds. They either take those dogmas quite literally, and are disgusted at finding that they will not lend themselves to this treatment, or else the effect produced on their minds, by the ill-advised and ignorant methods sometimes pursued by teachers of religion, is of an alarming and ghostly character. This latter style of teaching religion to children, and making out of it a sort of bugbear to frighten them into being good, is now happily on the decrease. But there are probably still many children, who, with respect to their religious education, might reasonably echo the complaint of Hamlet to his father's ghost, and ask what right teachers have

'So horribly to shake our disposition
With thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls.'"

In the same number I also noted "The Voluntary School Problem," by R. Waddington, and in the *Fortnightly Review* "The Doomed Board Schools," by Dr. Horton, of Hampstead. The *Church Review* for August 13th, in a leading article, points to the increase of juvenile crime, and in the number of parents who have complained to magistrates that they are unable to keep their unruly children in order, and consider that we ought to heed Solomon's wise axiom, "He that spareth his rod hateth his son, but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes." The writer characterizes the modern tendency to avoid physical pain at all costs as hedonism and not Christianity, and argues that just as it is necessary to suffer pain at the surgeon's hands to cure disease and save life, so the parent or teacher may inflict slight physical pain to prevent grave moral evils.

PATER JUNIOR.